

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON LIBRARIES AND INFORMATION SCIENCE

Fourth Meeting
February 17-18, 1972

There were present:

Members of the Commission: Messrs. Aines, Baker, Becker, Burkhardt, Cuadra, Dunlap, Goland (for the first day), Kemeny, Lerner, Lorenz (substituting for Mr. Mumford), Mrs. Moore, Miss Scott (except for the first morning), and Messrs. Velde and Zipf. Mr. Grotty (newly appointed to the Commission) did not attend.

Staff: Mr. Stevens; Mrs. Reszetar; and Miss Bowman, Mr. Burkhardt's secretary.

Guests: As indicated in the text below.

The Commission members had received the following documents, which are on file in the Commission office:

(1) A paper on National and Regional Lending Libraries, prepared by Mr. Dunlap, in which he, believing that a system of national and regional lending libraries would bring great benefits to the libraries of the country, proposed that the Commission's first contractual grant should be to the Association of Research Libraries (or some other competent organization) for exploration of the attendant problems and for the development of concrete recommendations which would lead to their solution.

(2) A recapitulation of the essential points deliberated at the Airlie Conference on Interlibrary Communications and Information Networks, prepared by Mr. Becker on the basis of the conference proceedings, which he had edited, which advocated that the Commission devise a comprehensive plan to facilitate the coordinated development of the nation's libraries, information centers, and other knowledge resources.

(3) A paper on "The Library of Congress as a National Library," prepared by the Library staff, which lists national library functions LC is now performing and activities that could be added if sufficient funds were available, and points out the benefits that could be expected to result if the Congress were to give formal recognition to the Library's dual role as the Library of Congress and the National Library of the U.S., to which it has traditionally given tacit approval and material support.

(4) Observations on the British Library, prepared by Mr. Lerner after he had visited the British Library, in which he stated his belief that there will be little in fact for the Commission to gain from emulation of the British Library concept, but advocated continuing liaison with it.

(5) Materials provided by Colonel Aines in preparation for Mr. Melvin Day's discussion of the Office of Science Information Service Program of NSF and COSATI.

With reference to requests that have been and will be received for financial support from NCLIS, the members agreed they had decided the Commission will not be a grant-making organization. Such money as it will have will be for its own work and whatever projects it might have.

The Chairman spoke of various organizations that want to appear before the Commission--the Council of National Library Associations, the National Federation of Science and Abstracting and Indexing Services (NFANIS), etc. The Chairman expressed himself as unwilling to take up more than one half-day per meeting for presentations. It was suggested that prospective visitors be asked to submit materials in advance which the Commission members could consider before inviting a presentation.

Mr. Melvin Day, Director of the Office of Science Information Service, NSF, described program areas with which his office is concerned and discussed various matters about which members of the Commission questioned him.

Mr. Day said that \$10,000,000 is available this year for grants made under the Information System Program--60% of which is going for support of discipline systems. The budget has been going down somewhat year by year from a former total of \$15,000,000.

Mr. Goland said that one consequence of decreasing federal support has been to make all the abstracting and indexing services extremely costly for the subscriber.

Members of the Commission expressed their concern over the development of incompatible systems that has taken place and the lack of cooperation between disciplines. Mr. Day commented that most information services are in deep financial trouble and that economic problems produce a growing unwillingness to work together and standardize. He added that the cost of abandoning present systems is huge, and that this is the main deterrent to standardizing. It was thought that NSF could and should bring about greater standardization and transferability by requiring, in making grants, that certain characteristics be built into the systems. Mr. Day agreed and spoke of NSF's plans to re-orient toward problem-solving and helping to develop methodology and software, with transferability built in.

A major change in the structure of the Office of Science Information Service is in prospect, and the following program structure is proposed:

- Information Systems
- Data Systems
- Publications
- Research
- International Activities

With respect to the research program, there will be a major overhaul, and the budget, which today is \$1,000,000, should triple over the next five years.

Turning to a discussion of COSATI (Committee on Scientific and Technical Information), Mr. Day was asked how it is related to the Federal Library Committee. He said that COSATI is a Committee with a parent body (the Federal Council for Science and Technology) and that this gives it a mechanism to get to high levels of government. COSATI has set up a Library Program Panel which works with the Federal Library Committee, and many programs are joint. On the working level the Federal Library Committee is concerned more with operating problems, but the Panel actually ties the library community together with large operating systems. Full members in COSATI represent members of the parent body; persons from other agencies are observers, but there is not much difference in their status.

Recently, administrative responsibility for COSATI was transferred from the Office of Science and Technology, Executive Office of the President, to NSF.

Mr. Day presented four proposals to the Commission:

- 1) That the Staff Director be authorized to serve as an observer with COSATI.
- 2) Joint sponsorship and funding of projects.
- 3) Briefing of COSATI by NFLIS.
- 4) A joint annual meeting.

After Mr. Day left the meeting at 11 a.m., his proposals were discussed. It was agreed that Mr. Stevens should attend COSATI meetings as an observer and that the Commission should inform COSATI of its activities. Mr. Lorenz added that the joint funding of projects is a popular notion. Mr. Cuadra said the Commission can ask COSATI to provide data or reactions to ideas--i.e., input into the Commission's plan. As for a joint annual meeting, Colonel Aines thinks it is important for the role of the National Commission to be understood and accepted with the kind of hope that is seen around the library community, and it would be good to have the kinds of people who are involved in COSATI meet with members of the Commission. Mr. Lorenz thought an annual report from Mr. Day might be preferable to a joint annual meeting, or perhaps Mr. Stevens can provide the needed liaison. It was agreed that at some point a joint meeting might be desirable, but that none should be planned until a reason for it was apparent.

The Chairman said he thinks the Office of Management and Budget counts on the Commission's collaboration with other agencies and on its obtaining assistance from them in getting its work done--and he sees nothing wrong with that in principle.

Mr. Cuadra said that NSF and COSATI appear to be much more concerned with abstracting and indexing, and scientific and technical information centers, than with libraries, and concerned with a highly educated community of users rather than with children, users of books, etc. Colonel Aines thought this not

so much the case as it might appear to be. The first responsibility of COSATI is to work with the Federal Council for Science and Technology. The Office of Science Information Service can take a more liberal approach and can enter any area.

The Chairman asked Mr. Becker to begin his presentation regarding information networks--saying that he hoped in this discussion it would be possible for the Commission to come to grips with an issue the members can agree is important to the country.

Mr. Becker referred to his "Recap of the Essential Points Deliberated at the Airlie Conference on Interlibrary Communications and Information Networks," which, he said, followed the structure of the Proceedings of the Conference he had edited, under the title Interlibrary Communications and Information Networks. The conference, he added, had comprised representatives from just about every part of the information community--about 150 people. Papers were prepared and distributed in advance. He called attention to the Conference Resolution--which had been directed to a Commission approved, but not yet assembled. The Resolution reads: "That, as a matter of priority, the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science devise a comprehensive plan to facilitate the coordinated development of the nation's libraries, information centers, and other knowledge resources. Further, that action be taken as soon as possible to appoint members of the Commission and fund its activities." This, Mr. Becker said, reflects the belief that fragmented growth is a weakening trend.

"What is a network?" he asked. He thinks of inter-dependence of systems, things, and components--of which there are various types. Networks sometimes are described in terms of equipment, at other times they are described by the kind of signal--digital or analogue. More often they are described by function --e.g., agricultural sciences, information networks, bio-medical communications networks, etc. He gave this formal definition of a network: Two or more information activities are engaged in a common pattern of information exchange through communications for some functional purpose. The concept of such a network (and this also is true of consortia) is predicated on formal organization and hard contractual understandings. If we think of a national network, we have to come to terms with organization. A telecommunication grid of some kind should be available to inter-connect various vertical pipes that have been developed. One can picture every different type of source of knowledge as being a vertical pipe, with a telecommunications grid laid over the different pipes for inter-connection, and the grid available to anyone anywhere for the resources in the vertical pipes. Telecommunication for this purpose could be new, or use could be made of communication facilities that exist and are being expanded.

If there were a national network, a directory ("yellow pages") to sources of information most responsive to need would be required, and the telecommunication grid should be two-way.

Mr. Becker proceeded to discuss his recapitulation of the Conference, which had been divided into five working groups:

- I. Networks Needs and Development.
- II. Network Services.
- III. Network Technology.
- IV. Network Organization.
- V. Network Planning.

Discussing section II-A of his paper, Mr. Becker said that the United States, more than any other country, has assembled information and knowledge into a cultural utility of compelling significance. And the rate at which information is produced is great, and much is in machine-readable form. Mr. Becker stressed the diversification of the resource.

Mr. Zipf asked, "How can useless material be edited and screened out?" Mr. Baker responded that government documents should be destroyed very quickly. The cultural trend of preservation is wrong--in terms of operational documents. He added that a network which aspires to associate with dimensions of data like NASA tapes and earth resources program data is probably a fallacy. There should probably be enormous decentralization.

Mr. Becker spoke next about section II-A-3 of his paper: "The idealized goal is to have the several libraries and information systems of the nation, not individually but collectively, provide each citizen with the information he wants when he wants it, and to do so at a cost sufficiently reasonable to be borne willingly by organized society." He said that burdensome cost might rule this out completely.

Speaking to section II-A-6, he said he does not think this means we do away with decentralization. Local resources have to be there, and strong enough to satisfy local needs--which constitute the major needs. Also, there must be the possibility of reliance on larger depositories.

Mr. Kemeny said he sees networks in a slightly different form. He thinks two-way communication is necessary and believes it will be more efficient to have major regional depositories, with most of the sending coming from regional depositories--rather than having most needs satisfied locally. Mr. Becker mentioned that there are one-of-a-kind resources that should not be duplicated. Mr. Kemeny guessed that regional depositories might cover 95% of materials--other places 5%. Mr. Lorenz asked whether distance will always be a factor; Mr. Baker thinks it will be, though a diminishing factor.

Mr. Lerner said that CATV looks a long way off from information delivery, but recent decisions about channel allocations, he feels, have been taken without attention to knowledge and information needs, and he thought the Commission should make some protest about this. Mr. Baker commented that, if a network is what is needed, he does not think CATV can provide it, because the switching capacity is too limited. Mr. Zipf asked whether the channel allocation question could be reopened later; Mr. Lerner thought it might be too late.

Mr. Kemeny said that even in the best of libraries the retrieval processes are out of date. This is one of the less expensive services the network could supply.

Mr. Cuadra said that he could, if the members of the Commission wished, bring in a terminal and demonstrate what "on line" systems are.

The need for a feed-back from users was mentioned. It was reported that the Office of Education is funding a nation-wide study of the use of Library Services and Construction Act funds to serve the needs of the disadvantaged. 2,500 non-users are being interviewed, in the belief that requests cannot be relied upon to determine needs.

Mr. Lerner, referring to page 21 of the Airlie Conference book, which dealt with users of information, asked, "Are we talking about an elitist network--a system of little use to 90% of the people? Mr. Goland responded that, in his view, the Commission cannot at this point establish as its guideline, all information for all people, and that perhaps it must at first deal with an elitist kind of information.

Mr. Kemeny, Mr. Cuadra, and Mr. Becker thought that the greatest need is for an overall plan and, though it may seem premature, and funds may not be available to solve anything in the near future, there are practical ways to proceed.

Mrs. Moore commented that traditionally the libraries have often not given thought to being information centers, and Mr. Kemeny suggested that perhaps the Commission should recommend that libraries be expanded into information centers.

Mr. Becker turned to the Working Group suggestions of the Group on Networks Needs and Development (Sec. II-D). Mr. Kemeny said that nothing will happen without federal funding and that standardization of needs should be agreed on first. No federal funding should go into a system that is not standardized.

At this point there was a recess for lunch.

Discussion returned to Sec. II-D-3 of Mr. Becker's paper. It was noted that a new factor had been introduced with the desire not to rely on property taxes for public school support. It was thought that at least public libraries fall within the same area.

Mr. Baker said there is a small program operating in Britain looking toward a machine-readable format in the hope that the English-speaking world could be bridged. He thought the Commission should look into the progress

being made there. It was noted that about eight countries are using the MARC Program, which is well on its way to becoming an international standard, but it cannot be used unless there is a good solid bibliographical base already.

Mr. Kemeny said that standardized bibliographical information is important, but he asked what it means for the typical user. There is still a design and implementation job to be done, and more research from the user point of view is another area of need. He believes there is a long step between bibliographical access and content access, and engineering the interface is still a problem.

Attention turned to item III-D-9 of Mr. Becker's paper and discussion of whether networks should come from the bottom up. Mr. Kemeny said that certain things would never come from the bottom and that it is much easier to fund some things on a national basis. Mr. Lorenz commented that many libraries would like to have "packages" provided for them.

Mr. Cuadra mentioned that the Office of Education has had a study done which produced a list of consortia and that guide-lines on building consortia will be out in about a month.

Mr. Lorenz, referring to item III-D-10 of Mr. Becker's paper, said that when the American National Standards Institute lays down a standard almost everyone follows it. The need is to hasten their work.

Referring to item III-D-11, there was discussion as to whether it would be useful for the Library of Congress to be designated a national bibliographic center.

Sec. IV-C-2 of the paper referred to CATV as possibly providing the final link into the home and said that channel capacity should be reserved for educational and public use. Colonel Aines asked whether there should be an effort to reserve channel capacity for information, regardless of present use, so that possibilities will not be foreclosed. The following statement (as refined and amended on the following day) was agreed upon:

The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, being advised that the proposed regulations of the Federal Communications Commission governing CATV channel allocation have been formulated without adequate consideration of the nation's informational needs and capacities, empowers its Chairman to investigate this matter and, if in his judgment the situation warrants, to communicate to the Office of Telecommunications Policy the Commission's view that the information area should be given further consideration before the regulations become effective.

Mr. Kemeny said that one place where his thinking differs from the Airlie House conference report is that it deals with nodes--each sending and receiving,

with switching network. He thinks rather of, say ten, regional centers into which nodes connect and the main sending is from the regional centers. He would argue that this would help with social and legal problems. Each library could, or not, contract for services from a regional center--making its own decision on whether it was worth the cost. It would be advantageous in obtaining federal funding, he thought, to say that help was available to every library.

Mr. Lorenz spoke of a remaining need for national coordination, with various regional centers, and said there ought to be building from original strength, as the medical system is built on strong medical libraries.

Referring to page 11 (VI. Planning) of Mr. Becker's paper, it was said that planning should start, then research may be needed, and pilot projects may be tried.

Mr. Becker noted that the conference produced a single recommendation, which he had quoted at the beginning of his report (see p. 4 of these minutes). He added that there had been a bare majority for assigning the national planning task to the Commission.

Mr. Burkhardt asked: "How does the planning get organized and going?" He said he wondered whether it is practicable for a group that meets for two days at rather long intervals to think this out as it ought to be thought out. He feels the need for someone to put the options to the Commission. Mr. Cuadra agreed, and said he thought that was a staff responsibility.

Mr. Goland thought the Commission had to decide whether to focus on the elite or on, for example, the rural town in the south. Mr. Lorenz spoke of a network slanted toward elitist utilization as only a part of a national network. His notion would be to work strenuously on this sub-network first, but he would not argue with the need for a total planning concept.

Mr. Becker asked whether the members of the Commission could tick off five or six topics that deserve their attention. Mr. Cuadra answered by referring to the five "Pre-planning" items listed on p. 12 of Mr. Becker's paper.

Mr. Kemeny said he believed he had a basic disagreement with Mr. Goland. He thinks the first priority is services that are useful to all libraries. If the Commission can come up with a network that does that, he added, it would be a help to everything. He thinks it would be a mistake to start with special networks. Mr. Baker agreed, and said it is also impracticable to start there as well. On Mr. Kemeny's motion, the following resolution was adopted:

RESOLVED, that the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science should give first priority in its planning effort to providing new and improved services that will be helpful to all libraries in the country and their users, at every level of society.

Mr. Baker said it ought to be very hard and fast national policy that when enterprises like cancer research are undertaken the information component must be supported in the basic funding of the project. He then proposed a resolution, which was adopted the next day in the following form:

RESOLVED, that the need for appropriate documentation, bibliographical, and other information resources should be recognized in federal programs, and that provision for support be included in executive orders and other implementing directives.

Discussion returned to recent agitation and litigation in opposition to the support of schools by local property taxes, and it was agreed that the Commission ought to do what it could to establish the concept that public libraries, like public schools, should not be supported by this means. The following resolution (as refined and amended on the following day) was adopted:

RESOLVED, that the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science believes that national equality of access to information is as important as equality in education.

The Commission has considered the implications of recent court decisions, in California and elsewhere, holding that the local property tax is not the proper base for public school funding.

The Commission believes that the same principle of equality in educational opportunity must be applied to the nation's public libraries and other publicly supported information facilities, whose resources and services are a vital part of the continuing educational process.

If, as is possible under various legal challenges to the system, the current method of funding public schools is changed, library funding must change, too. It would be unfair to have schools operating on a broad tax base, and libraries under a more restrictive one.

The Commission calls upon public libraries and publicly supported information facilities across America to watch these developments closely and to be sure that the target of national equality of access to information for all citizens is a priority, not an afterthought.

The Commission recessed at this point, reconvening in the morning of February 18, when the members were taken on a tour of the Library of Congress.

Mr. Kemeny asked whether there is not, in this age, some form of providing library service that is more efficient than that available at present. He talked about his experience of trying to look at a microfilm of the New York Times at the Library of Congress and of book retrieval experience at Dartmouth College. He said he is concerned because the entire library community is not profiting from modern technology. There is not yet a major effort to try for new systems design for libraries of the future; and this

will take at least ten years, he said, if we start now. Mr. Zipf said he thinks every city library is in the position of wanting to make the right changes so that it will fit into a future national scheme.

An educational facilities laboratory study financed by the Ford Foundation was discussed--concerned, at least in part, with building design. Mr. Stevens said he thought some of the conclusions of this study were in error, and he hopes reconsideration will be given to them.

Mr. Cuadra returned to the importance of "pre-planning." Someone, he said, has to do enough home work to present concepts for examination. He thought the Commission had no common notion. Some of its discussion has been about libraries and some about abstracting and indexing, etc. It has yet to define its common concerns and the periphery of those concerns. Mr. Lorenz added that these are questions the Commission itself must decide; they cannot be delegated.

It was agreed that in an effort to come to some common understanding of the kind and extent of the Commission's interests, Mr. Stevens should draft and send to the members a questionnaire to elicit their opinions on what are the most important things for the Commission to do. It should allow for the members' suggestions, as well as for responses concerning the topics listed. The latter should cover interest areas, issues, objectives, requirements for services, financing, etc. Mr. Stevens would then be expected to write a staff paper based on the responses.

The Chairman still thought, however, that it is not necessary to have "the whole ball park" defined before moving to do something pertinent. In this connection he asked the Commission's opinion of Mr. Dunlap's proposal, in his paper on National and Regional Lending Libraries, that it contract for a study that would examine problems attendant to the establishment of a system of national and regional lending libraries and develop concrete recommendations which would lead to their solution. Mr. Dunlap commented that he thought it impossible that what he is talking about will not be within the Commission's "ball park." It is urgent, he said, and would meet with tremendous enthusiasm. Mr. Lorenz said that the Association of Research Libraries has submitted a request to NSF for the funding of a feasibility study of national and regional lending resources. If funded it would include investigation of improvements that could be made in the present inter-library loan system, including the possibility of fees for lending, and, as another phase, the study of how periodical resources could be handled. He suggested that the Commission wait until its April meeting, when the outcome of the application to NSF would probably be known, to decide about proceeding with the Dunlap plan.

At this point there was a recess for lunch.

After lunch, discussion turned to Mr. Lorenz's paper on "The Library of Congress as a National Library." It was agreed that no special benefits could be expected to accrue from a transfer of LC to the executive branch of the government and, since Congress is proud of LC and has been relatively generous in supporting its programs, no such change should be contemplated.

Mr. Lorenz said he would be glad if a sub-group of the Commission could be designated and given specific opportunity and responsibility to work closely with LC and fit it into the full Commission's program. Mr. Burkhardt said he would keep the possibility of such a sub-committee in mind, and would have it in mind also with respect to the other national libraries.

Mr. Lorenz mentioned that LC had had considerable success in getting projects funded initially by OE, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Council on Library Resources, etc., and then in obtaining Congressional appropriations for carrying on the projects.

LC's funds for 1971 are \$67,000,000--a trebling of funds in ten years. The staff has grown from 2,700 to 4,000 in ten years. The collection has grown from 41,000,000 pieces to 64,000,000 pieces. He added that the most difficult money to obtain is for retroactive change-over.

Mr. Stevens began his report as Executive Director with the recognition of his appreciation for the work Mrs. Reszetar had done. Mr. Stevens, himself had come on duty as a consultant in December and believed that he was on the payroll as of February 11, 1972. He had been working part-time until that date. A secretary, Mrs. Ulrich, had joined the staff eight days previously and another secretary, Mrs. Dixon, was expected shortly. Candidates for the Deputy Director job were being interviewed.

Mr. Stevens reported that OMB had set the budget for the Commission at \$400,000 for fiscal 1973. It was thought that budget hearings might be as late as May.

With respect to the chart of fundamental facts about various types of libraries which Mr. Theodore Shuchat had been expected to prepare--it had been decided that the problem was unresolvable within the time at his disposal. Mr. Shuchat will turn over the material he has gathered to Mr. Stevens.

Mr. Stevens expected to meet with Mr. Frank L. Schick, Director of the Library Surveys Branch of the Office of Education, on February 23. Mr. Schick, it was noted, would like to appear before the Commission at a future meeting.

Mr. Stevens reported that he is collecting the various library plans that have been or are being prepared by the states and will have them reviewed and a report on them prepared for the Commission. As for a review of important papers the Commission should know about--with digests, Mr. Stevens hopes to find someone to get started on this work before April. Contacts with people in Washington have begun and correspondence and visitors to the office have been plentiful.

Colonel Aines suggested that the Commission seek legal advice on whether it should issue public statements, but other members saw no objection to speaking out on matters that were its legitimate concern. They wished to announce publicly the resolutions they had adopted, but agreed that the

statement of position on CATV (see page 9 of these minutes) should not be included in a press release.

It was agreed that the National Library of Medicine should be visited at the time of the next meeting.

It was agreed also that the meeting tentatively scheduled for June 15-16 should be held, in Washington, and at that time the National Agricultural Library should be visited.

CB
3/14/72